CLAIMS

I claim:

1.   A method for identifying which business rule or rules relate to a certain segment of source or object code, comprising the steps of:

(a)   identifying a set of business rules;

(b)   providing each business rule with a business rule unique identifier; and

(c)   attaching an attribute to a segment of code, wherein the attribute contains the business rule unique identifier.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of validating the business rule at coding time.

3.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of validating the business rule at compile time.

4.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of validating the business rule on demand.

5.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of validating at coding time the existence of a business rule.

6.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of validating at compile time the existence of a business rule.

7.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of validating on demand the existence of a business rule.

8.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of querying compiled code for the use of a given business rule.

9.	The method of claim 1, wherein the business rules are contained in a business rule repository.

10.	The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of utilizing a business rule source code cross-reference plug-in to add a business rule that is represented by a particular business rule unique identifier to the business rule repository.

11.	The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of utilizing a business rule source code cross-reference index to store metadata on the relationships between certain segments of source or object code and the business rules.

12.	An automated system comprising:

(a)	a set of business rules;

(b)	a set of business rule unique identifiers, wherein each business rule unique identifier corresponds to one and only one business rule; and

(c)	one or more attributes attached to one or more segments of source or object code, wherein each attribute contains at least one business rule unique identifier.

13.	The automated system of claim 12, further comprising a business rule source code cross-reference plug-in.

14.	The automated system of claim 13, further comprising an integrated development environment (IDE) with a plug-in interface, wherein the business rule source code cross-reference plug-in communicates with the IDE via the plug-in interface.

15.	The automated system of claim 12, further comprising a business rule source code cross-reference index.

16.	The automated system of claim 12, further comprising a business rule source code cross-reference engine.

17. The automated system of claim 16, wherein the business rule source code cross-reference engine comprises a compiled object code verifier, a compiled object code indexer, a source code verifier, an index query engine, and a compiled object code query engine.

18. The automated system of claim 17, wherein the compiled object code verifier takes compiled attributed object code and verifies as a post-compile process the existence of a particular business rule according to the attributes within the object code.

19. The automated system of claim 17, wherein the compiled object code indexer indexes to a repository the attributes in the object code.

20. The automated system of claim 17, wherein the source code verifier takes source code segments, parses out the attributes from the source code, and validates the attributes.

21. The automated system of claim 17, further comprising a business rule source code cross-reference index, wherein the index query engine provides result sets based on given criteria as compared against the business rule source code cross-reference index.

22. The automated system of claim 17, wherein the attributes contain metadata, and wherein the compiled object code query engine performs one or more searches against compiled attributed object code and returns a result set based on the attribute metadata and the search criteria.

23. The automated system of claim 12, further comprising a cross-reference search tool and a user interface for the cross-reference search tool.

24. The automated system of claim 23, wherein the cross-reference search tool interacts with external applications.

25. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the acts recited in claim 2.

26. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the acts recited in claim 3.

27. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the acts recited in claim 4.

28. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the acts recited in claim 5.

29. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the acts recited in claim 6.

30. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the acts recited in claim 7.

31. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the acts recited in claim 8.